

## Neighborhood Watch Programs



West Linn Police Department Neighborhood Watch Program

You've heard about the benefits of NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH participation. You suspect – or know – there is a crime problem in your area. How do you get a program started in your neighborhood?

### **First...**

Form a small planning committee of neighbors to discuss needs, the level of interest, and possible problems. Decide on a date and place for an initial NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH meeting.

### **Next...**

Contact your local law enforcement agency. Request a crime prevention officer come to a group meeting to discuss NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH and help assess your community's problems and needs.

Inquire about crime statistics for your area, but bear in mind, crime is typically under-reported. Ask the officer for a list of local and national contacts who will assist you in organizing and keeping your program going along with samples of NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH signs, decals, and literature.

### **Finally...**

Contact as many of your neighbors as possible, asking them:

- . If they feel at risk of being burglarized or being the victim of other crimes;
- . If they have taken any steps to protect their homes; and
- . If they would be willing to attend a meeting to organize a NEIGHBOR HOOD WATCH group in your area.

You may be surprised to learn how many of your neighbors' lives have already been touched by crime!

### **Planning for a Successful First Meeting**

Schedule your kickoff meeting in a place convenient to the neighborhood, such as a private home, church, community building, school or library.

Contact your police department 10 to 14 days in advance and inform officials of the date and place of the first

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meeting; verify an officer will be able to attend.

Draw a large map of all the streets and households to be covered by your NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH organization. Start with a manageable number of homes at first; you can always add other areas.

Design a flyer or letter of invitation and deliver to every home on your target list. Teenagers and scouts in the neighborhood can play a valuable role by delivering announcements and information.

Follow up each invitation with a call or personal visit, reminding neighbors of the meeting time and place. Try to get each household to commit at least one adult member to the meeting so you can estimate potential attendance. All family members are welcome to join NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH, as young people can add substantially to the success of the program. Senior citizen participation is also a plus; retired seniors are home and can observe the neighborhood when many other adults are at work.

### **Conducting the First Meeting**

Arrive early at the meeting to introduce the crime prevention officer and help everyone become acquainted. Following the officer's presentation, ask for details concerning any area of the NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH program that may not be clear, such as benefits of membership, training programs, availability of signs and materials, etc.

Discuss the results of the neighborhood crime survey. Revealing information about crimes and suspicious incidents or activities in your area can often generate lively discussion and active commitment to the program.

Set clear, achievable goals for your program. Your crime prevention officer can offer insight into what your new group can realistically expect to accomplish.

Start a list of names, addresses, phone numbers, and vehicle descriptions of those who decide to participate in the program. You may also want to include names and ages of their children, work and school schedules, and whether or not their homes have burglar alarms or timers on lights. While some of this information may seem somewhat personal to neighbors who have just met, it is essential they make a commitment to the WATCH effort at this state and agree to work together.

Choose high visibility NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH signs and decals to identify participating homes and streets (the cost can be divided among households). Your crime prevention officer may assist you in ordering materials, but s/he may want to postpone this option until a good percentage of the residents have agreed to participate and ample training has been conducted.

Discuss program coordination; explain the responsibilities of the NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH Coordinator and the block captains. Proceed with nominations and election of persons (or designation of volunteers) to fill these positions.

Ask the officer to suggest topics and speakers for future meetings. Determine the time and place of next meeting. The members of the group should determine how often they would meet, but to keep the momentum going during the start-up phase, it is best to schedule monthly meetings.

Some of the most successful WATCH programs require members' attendance during the first three to five meetings. These meetings are essential in organizing and training the participants, supplying them with crime prevention procedures, and reinforcing the NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH concepts and commitment. These meetings are also instrumental in establishing a bond between group members.

### **Following Meeting**

After the meeting, plan to distribute literature to residents in the community who were unable to attend. This may encourage them to be at the next meeting.

### **Program Coordination:**

**The Neighborhood Watch Coordinator  
(Neighborhood Liaison Officer WLPD)**

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The Coordinator's job is crucial to the success of your program. This may be just the right job for a retiree or other individual who has extra time at home. This person's responsibilities may include:

- Expanding the program and maintaining a current list of participants and neighborhood residents, including names, addresses, home and work telephone numbers, and vehicle descriptions;
- Acting as liaison between WATCH members, law enforcement officers, civic groups, and block captains;
- Arranging neighborhood crime prevention training programs;
- Obtaining and distributing crime prevention materials, such as stickers and signs;
- Involving others to develop specific crime prevention projects;
- Encouraging participation in "Operation Identification," a nationwide program in which personal property is marked legibly with a unique identifying number to permit positive identification if valuables are lost or stolen.

### The Block Captain

Block captains should be designated for every 10-15 houses, and they should be directly involved with their immediate neighbors. The block captain's responsibilities may include:

- Acting as liaison between block residents and the Coordinator;
  - Establishing a "telephone chain" and/or email list by compiling and distributing a current list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of block participants;
  - Visiting and inviting new residents to join NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH; notifying them of meetings and training sessions;
  - Establishing the "Operation Identification" program;
  - Contacting each neighbor as often as possible to discuss possible crime problems needs for assistance, and suggestions for program improvement and to just touch base.
- (Monthly-bi-monthly)

If you are interested in starting a Neighborhood Watch Program contact

Captain Ron Schwartz

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### Supporting Documents



[NeighborhoodWatchBrochure.pdf](#)

- [Police](#)

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